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## NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE

# PROBABLE DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH AFRICA

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## CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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## PROBABLE DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH AFRICA

## THE PROBLEM

To assess: (a) the strategic importance of North Africa;<sup>1</sup> (b) the current strength and probable development of local nationalism in the area; (c) probable French and Spanish ability to cope with this problem; (d) its likely international repercussions; and (e) probable trends in Libya.

## CONCLUSIONS

1. Chiefly because of its location along the southern littoral of the Mediterranean and its extensive military base network, North Africa is of major strategic importance to France, the US, and other NATO powers.

2. The chief problem in the area is the increasing instability created by growing local nationalism in French North Africa, especially in Tunisia and Morocco.

3. France will probably make a series of limited concessions to the nationalists. However, it is determined to retain control, by force if necessary, over French North Africa, which it regards as the most vital part of its overseas empire. Spain is probably equally determined to retain its hold on Spanish Morocco.

4. French reforms and security capabilities probably will forestall the development of any serious threat to French control over Morocco and Tunisia for the next several years. However, we believe

that such concessions by the French will not be sufficiently timely or comprehensive to satisfy the nationalists. They will almost certainly increase their demands for complete independence and might, if they fail to achieve their objectives, turn to the Communists for support.

5. There also will probably be a further growth in foreign sympathy for the nationalist cause, especially among the Arab-Asian nations, which will stimulate nationalist activities and exert pressure on the French.

6. So long as French military capabilities are not seriously reduced, we believe that the nationalists, acting alone, will not be able to oust the French by force. However, as nationalist strength increases, and if the French refuse to make further concessions, the nationalists might attempt an organized large-scale revolt, anticipating that such a revolt would arouse favorable world opinion and result in political intervention, probably through the UN. We believe that such a revolt is unlikely within the next several years.

<sup>1</sup> The term North Africa, as used in this paper, means French North Africa, Spanish Morocco, Tangier, and Libya.

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7. Nevertheless, increasing native resistance to French control will probably — over a period of years — create a serious strain on French resources and limit the strategic usefulness of French North Africa to the West. We estimate that eventually France will either have to yield independence, contenting itself with some form of close military and economic ties, or else resort to increasingly costly military repression.

8. The growth of organized nationalist activity in Algeria will probably lag behind that in adjacent areas, but we believe that eventually the conflict between French and nationalist interests in Algeria may prove the most difficult to resolve.

9. We believe that the Communists will not capture control of the nationalist movements in the next several years. However, if nationalist leaders should

establish a common front with the Communists, such action would seriously increase sabotage capabilities and strengthen the opposition to the stationing of Western troops and establishment of Western bases in the area.

10. The North African problem will probably become a source of serious friction among the non-Communist nations. The US in particular is confronted with a major policy dilemma and with the prospect of a further strain on its relations with both France and the Arab-Asian states.

11. Libya will probably remain oriented toward the US and UK, but its economic weakness, political immaturity, and unresolved Tripolitanian-Cyrenaican differences create serious problems which threaten its future stability and usefulness as a Western base.

## DISCUSSION

### Strategic Importance of North Africa

12. Chiefly because of its location along the southern littoral of the Western Mediterranean and its extensive military base network, North Africa is of major strategic importance to France and her NATO partners, especially the US and UK. North Africa provides a base for: (a) control of the Western Mediterranean and its Atlantic approaches; (b) invasion operations within the Mediterranean basin; and (c) air operations against Europe, European USSR, and Middle East.

13. *Military.* French North Africa, with its population of over 21,000,000, is important to France as: (a) a reservoir of military manpower; (b) the site of major base and training areas; and (c) a place to which the French and others could retreat, if necessary, in event of war. According to French standards for

colonial troops, there are a total of 2,290,000 physically fit natives of military age. Of these there are at present over 95,000 in the French army, many of them serving in Indochina. Morocco is the chief basic training area for the French air force. French naval bases exist at Casablanca, Mers-El-Kebir, Algiers, and Bizerte. The US is also completing five strategic air bases in Morocco as well as expanding the naval air base at Port Lyautey. Spain utilizes Spanish Morocco as a training area and a source of native troops.

14. Libya's location in the Eastern Mediterranean gives it considerable military importance. The US and UK each operate a large air base there. Libya also serves as a UK garrison area, the importance of which would increase if UK forces withdrew from Egypt.

15. *Economic.* The predominantly agricultural North African economies are relatively

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poor and underdeveloped. The presently developed resources of the area are not of major economic importance except to France. The chief extractive industries are phosphates, iron ore, and manganese. Since World War II, some 10-15 percent of French imports (chiefly wines, phosphates, cereals, fruits, vegetables, and fish) have come from French North Africa, while 20-25 percent of French exports have gone to that area. On the other hand, French North Africa's postwar budgetary and trade deficits have been a burden on France.

16. The French have substantial investments in North Africa. They have developed excellent port facilities and a good transport network. However, the outlook for large-scale industrial development is severely limited by the shortage of fuel resources, investment capital, and skilled labor. French development programs envisage no more than modest industrialization, chiefly through increased use of hydro-electric power, especially in French Morocco. These programs emphasize production of raw materials and food crops to meet metropolitan needs. Roughly a quarter of the arable land is under relatively efficient European cultivation, but native agriculture is for the most part inefficient. The population of North Africa is increasing more rapidly than the food supply, and the region is in danger of becoming a chronic food deficit rather than surplus area.

### Current Problems in French and Spanish North Africa<sup>2</sup>

17. The most serious problem in North Africa is the growing state of tension created by the rapid postwar growth of nationalist sentiment in the French protectorates of Tunisia and Morocco and to a less extent in Algeria. The nationalists in general look toward ultimate independence, but they vary in their immediate demands. Nationalism, however, has nowhere yet developed to the point where it represents a serious threat to French control.

<sup>2</sup> For a more detailed appraisal of the situation in each region see Supplement to NIE-69, "The Current Situation in North Africa," published 12 September 1952.

18. Although Tunisia and Morocco are nominally sovereign states under their own native rulers, the Bey and Sultan, in practice the French protectorate government controls and administers each country. The chief existing limitation on French authority is that the Bey and Sultan must countersign all legislative decrees. Algeria is administered as an integral part of France. The French Government and the large population of some 1,600,000 residents of French descent ("colons") dominate the modern sector of the economy in all three areas; most technical and managerial positions are held by the French. A garrison of some 139,000 troops assures close security control. French control is also facilitated by the existence of various pro-French native groups.

19. Among the Arab and Berber population, especially the educated classes, there has been a gradual increase in political consciousness and a sense of national identity, largely as a result of continued exposure to Western political and social concepts. The nationalists have been encouraged to press their demands more actively by developments in Iran and Egypt, by adjacent Libya's achievement of independence, and by the external sympathy and support they have received. For example, Arab-Asian efforts to secure them a UN hearing have served as a major stimulus to their cause.

20. Except in Tunisia, however, the nationalist parties themselves have not yet developed a high degree of organization or acquired active mass support. They still consist mostly of an educated middle-class minority organized chiefly in the cities, with a popular base for the most part only in urban laboring groups. The illiterate rural bulk of the population has only slight political consciousness. Moreover, the nationalist movements in some areas are internally divided and without effective leadership. None of the nationalist movements are presently capable of successful armed revolt, though the nationalists could seriously handicap the French administration through non-cooperation, sabotage, and other forms of pressure.

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21. *Tunisia.* The nationalist problem is most acute in Tunisia, where the native society is politically and culturally the most advanced in North Africa and has been allowed, since World War II, fairly extensive participation in government by the French. The current tension in Tunisia resulted from the breakdown of reform negotiations at the end of 1951. French rejection of nationalist requests for recognition of Tunisian internal autonomy and for a program leading gradually to independence led to nationalist efforts to place Tunisia's case before the UN and to the outbreak of strikes and riots. France retaliated by implementing a strict state of siege, arresting the nationalist leaders, and later dismissing the pro-nationalist cabinet. While these measures have kept the situation under control, they have prevented any reconciliation and, together with the prospect of UN action, have caused leading nationalists to demand complete and immediate independence. Hoping to forestall UN action, France announced a limited "reform" program and attempted to secure the Bey's approval. The Bey, under nationalist pressure, is apparently temporizing, because the Tunisian case is now scheduled for discussion in the Seventh UN General Assembly.

22. *Morocco.* Since World War II nationalism has also created increasing tensions in French Morocco, where French political and economic control is more complete than in Tunisia. The French have traditionally followed a policy of "divide and rule" by capitalizing on the historic antipathies of the Berbers and Arabs. There are signs that this policy is becoming less effective. The Istiqlal, the dominant nationalist party, currently demands immediate, complete independence, believing that to follow the evolutionary Tunisian pattern of gradual native participation in government would postpone Moroccan self-determination for many decades. Nationalism has also received the active support of the young and able Sultan of Morocco who, although stripped of governmental power, has grown in popular prestige. His demands for revision of the protectorate treaty, and the

consequent riots, almost led to his deposition by the French in 1951. In March 1952 he renewed his demands, and a potentially explosive situation now exists.

23. *Algeria.* Organized nationalist activity is less effective in Algeria. Longest under French control, Algeria has the largest population of French descent, and lacks a cohesive native society and a hereditary sovereign around whom nationalists could rally. The indigenous population has French citizenship, but its participation in government is severely limited by various devices which insure the political predominance of the French residents. The nationalist movement is still largely factionalized. An extremist faction favors violent action to achieve independence, while a moderate group appears to favor gradual evolution within the French Union. The *ulema*, Moslem religious teachers, appear to be the natural leaders of the people. Many of them support the nationalist movements and have been endeavoring to reconcile the aims of the nationalist factions. Some have also shown willingness to ally with the Communists to further their own ends. However, they do not form a united group which is fully identified with the nationalist cause.

24. *Spanish Morocco and Tangier.* Close Spanish controls, reinforced by some 60,000 troops, have maintained stability in Spanish Morocco, but the nationalist Islah Party has developed considerable strength. As part of its policy of wooing the Arab states Spain has recently made gestures favorable to native nationalism, but has not materially relaxed its control. The Spanish probably do not intend to grant any significant degree of self-government to the Arabs, but hope rather to play up apparent Hispano-Moorish "cooperation" in order to better Spain's relations with the Arab states. Spain's ostensibly lenient attitude toward the Arabs in Spanish Morocco has been a cause of embarrassment to the French.

25. Spain has now demanded the same degree of participation in the administration of the International Zone of Tangier as it had before

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World War II. The other participating powers probably will meet Spain's demands in large part. France and Spain appear anxious to insure greater security in Tangier, which is a center of North African nationalist intrigues.

26. *Cooperation between the Nationalist Movements.* To date, there has been little coordination between the nationalist movements in Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia, although there have been sympathy strikes and "days of mourning" designed to show Moslem solidarity. The Maghreb Bureau in Cairo, financially supported by the Arab League, includes representatives of most North African nationalist parties and periodically issues directives to them, but the parties display no enthusiasm for the Bureau and cooperate only when it suits their local purposes. Political and personal differences between the Maghreb leaders also have prevented the effective functioning of the Bureau, and its chief figure, Abdel Krim, has recently resigned.

27. *Communist Influence.* The Communist parties of Algeria, French Morocco, and Tunisia maintain close liaison with, and are directed and largely financed by the French Communist Party. To date, the small North African Communist parties have had only limited influence on the nationalist movements, largely because the nationalists realize that such ties would alienate many sympathizers in non-Communist areas and because the local Communist parties are largely French in membership.

### Probable Developments in French North Africa

28. *International Pressures.* External support is already playing a major part in the development of the nationalist movements in North Africa. The chief source of this support has been the Arab-Asian nations, which not only sympathize with national independence movements but in the case of the Arab states have ties of cultural, racial, and religious kinship as well. The Arab and Asian states will almost certainly increase their efforts to help the nationalist causes, especially

through continuing efforts to bring the Tunisian and Moroccan cases into the UN. These cases will almost certainly gain a hearing, and the Arab-Asian Bloc may eventually secure some form of UN action. Any US action in the UN which could be construed as favorable to the nationalists would be a major stimulus to their activities.

29. Such external pressures will not only further stimulate nationalist activities, but will probably have substantial influence on French policy. While France is apparently now willing to permit inscription of the Tunisian case on the UN agenda, it is strongly opposed to any external interference in what it considers to be a purely French problem, and might refuse to abide by any UN recommendations. On the other hand, France might be influenced by UN pressure to grant more extensive and earlier concessions to the nationalists than it presently appears willing to make.

30. Although the North African nationalists have so far received little direct material assistance from the outside, the Arab states may seek to increase such assistance in the future, particularly if their relations with the West remain strained. Their capabilities for material assistance will remain limited because of their own small resources as well as French security controls, but they can help nationalist exiles, provide some funds, and possibly assist in smuggling arms.

31. *French Intentions.* The proximity of North Africa to France, the large and well-entrenched French population, and the extensive French investments in the area have created a unique colonial relationship. The ties between North Africa and France are so close as to make extremely difficult any reconciliation between French interests and nationalist desires for independence. However, the French recognize the necessity for evolutionary political change in North Africa. On the other hand, they will probably continue to act belatedly in response to external pressures rather than try to reduce the threat of local nationalism by fore-handed reforms. The Socialists and many MRP members favor

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early and liberal concessions, but the right-wing parties, especially the Gaullists, oppose such a policy. The trend to the right in France probably has made the French Government less willing to implement early and liberal reforms. The "colons" also oppose any broad changes which would threaten their interests and security. Whatever the extent of French concessions, France probably will not hesitate to use force to control any nationalist outbreaks, despite the effect on world opinion which such repression might have.

32. French policies will vary in Tunisia, Morocco, and Algeria, because of the differing French ties with these areas and their different stages of political development. The presently proposed French reform program in Tunisia allows among other things, for a Tunisian majority in the cabinet, and a gradual but large increase of natives in the civil service. It is almost certain, however, that France will not meet the nationalist demands for an all-Tunisian cabinet responsible to an elected all-Tunisian legislature, and an all-native administration.

33. France probably will also institute a gradual reform program in Morocco in the near future, though on a more modest scale. This program probably will call for an increase in the number of elective native rural councils, from which cadres could be drawn for later regional or provincial assemblies. There is little chance of early French agreement to the establishment of a national legislature, although the French apparently contemplate ultimate replacement of the present Council of Government by a consultative assembly with one Moroccan and one mixed house. France also hopes to obtain the Sultan's approval for the creation of municipal councils with local "colon" participation and the legalization of Moroccan participation in labor unions (now tacitly permitted) on condition that at least half the officers remain French. These two reforms would actually strengthen the French position in Morocco by "legalizing" French participation in Moroccan unions and local government.

34. Over the long run France will probably grant a considerably greater degree of local autonomy, first in Tunisia and later in Morocco. The French appear to envisage a timetable for gradual achievement of such autonomy over a five-year period in Tunisia and a much longer period, perhaps ten to fifteen years, in Morocco.

35. However, we believe that future French governments will insist at a minimum on retaining certain key controls over Tunisia and Morocco, particularly in the fields of foreign affairs, security, and to some extent public finance. France probably will also insist on protecting the interests of the "colons" by forcing the nationalists to allow the "colons," even though French citizens, the legal right to vote and hold office. The French may propose the institution of dual citizenship to overcome the strong nationalist objections to such "co-sovereignty." France apparently hopes that in the very long term Tunisia and Morocco could be persuaded to become Associated States in the French Union, or some variant thereof.

36. The French do not contemplate granting autonomy to Algeria, but rather strengthening Algeria's integration into the metropole. As an inducement to the Moslem population to accept such integration, France will probably feel compelled to grant to the Moslems such benefits as: (a) extension of French educational facilities; (b) wider application of French social legislation; (c) increased participation in local and regional councils; and (d) increased powers for the Algerian Assembly. Eventually the post of Governor General might be abolished, thus eliminating the chief symbol of colonial status.

37. *Probable Further Growth of Nationalism.* We consider it almost certain that nationalist opposition to French control will continue to grow rapidly. The limited and gradual French reform programs described above are unlikely to keep pace with increasing nationalist demands. Moreover, in allowing greater native participation in local administration, such reforms will almost certainly increase both nationalist desires and capabilities for self-government. Because of this, as well as the

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growing external support for the nationalists, we believe that demands for complete independence will grow.

38. However, in Tunisia and Morocco the combination of limited nationalist capabilities and extensive French security controls will probably forestall for a number of years nationalist attempts to oust the French by force. Accordingly, the nationalists will probably feel compelled for some time to accept a gradualist approach toward their objectives. In particular, they may be forced to accept French "colon" participation in the protectorate government, which is their chief objection to present French reform programs.

39. Nevertheless, since nationalist demands will outrun French concessions, tensions will almost certainly increase. The nationalist leaders will increase their efforts to enlist support abroad, particularly to secure backing for their cases in the UN. Moreover, they may periodically resort to further sabotage and terrorism, calculated to attract international attention and put pressure on the French. French countermeasures might temporarily put down aggressive nationalist activity but would probably lead to its eventual resumption in even more violent form.

40. The Sultan of Morocco and even the Bey of Tunis will probably identify themselves more openly with the nationalist cause. The Sultan in particular may assume open leadership of the nationalist movement, and in view of his growing stature among his people and the force of world opinion, the French would now hesitate to depose him. On the other hand, both the Sultan and Bey are still vulnerable to French pressures and may therefore exercise some moderating influence on the nationalists.

41. So long as French military capabilities are not seriously reduced, we believe that the nationalists, acting alone, will not be able to oust the French by force. However, as nationalist strength increases, and if the French refuse to make further concessions, the nationalists might attempt an organized large-scale revolt, anticipating that such a revolt would arouse favorable world opinion and

result in political intervention, probably through the UN. We believe that such a revolt is unlikely within the next several years.

42. The growth of organized nationalist activity in Algeria will probably lag behind that in adjacent areas. The objectives of many Algerian nationalists are likely to remain moderate in the next few years, with emphasis on removal of discrimination and on more Moslem participation in government. However, French concessions are unlikely to be sufficient to prevent the further growth of the nationalist movement.

43. Because of the strong French position in Algeria and the lack of any legal Algerian sovereignty, the Algerians might be more willing than their neighbors to accept some such status as that of an associated state within the French Union. We believe, however, that the French will be unwilling in this case to alter the juridical ties between Algeria and the metropole, and that the conflict between French and nationalists in this area may ultimately prove the most difficult to resolve.

44. The Communists will probably continue their efforts to exploit nationalist desires for independence by attempting to capture the nationalist movements. There is some danger that should the nationalists fail to achieve their objectives they would accept Communist support. While we believe that the Communists will not capture control of any nationalist movement in the next several years, Communist influence might lead to the adoption of more anti-Western policies and to increasing resort to direct action on the part of the nationalist groups. If nationalist leaders should establish a common front with the Communists, such action would seriously increase sabotage capabilities and strengthen the opposition to the stationing of Western troops and establishing of Western bases in the area.

45. *Effect on French and NATO Position.* In the light of the above factors we believe that the current outlook is one of growing instability, characterized by sporadic crises and disturbances created by the growing nationalist opposition to French control in North

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Africa. While we believe that the nationalists cannot oust the French from North Africa, increasing native resistance will probably — over a period — create a serious drain on French financial and manpower resources and impede French use of the area as a base. Moreover, the reliability of French North African troops might decrease under the stimulus of nationalism, reducing the value of this major military asset. Ultimately France will probably either have to grant independence or else resort to increasingly costly military repression. In the latter case the time may come when a combination of nationalist insurrections and external pro-nationalist pressures will present France with problems insoluble short of complete withdrawal.

46. If the French should grant independence, the nationalists would in return almost certainly accept close military and economic ties with France. The Algerians in particular might even accept some form of political association within the French Union. However, unless such a settlement is made within the next several years, the nationalists would accept such ties only with great reluctance and would probably repudiate them as soon as feasible.

47. Increasing nationalist resistance to French control in North Africa would also impede US and NATO use of bases in the area and might constitute a serious threat to the security of these bases, particularly if the nationalist movements become pro-Communist in their orientation.

### International Implications of North African Developments

48. The growing conflict between the French and nationalists in North Africa will also have important international repercussions. Differences over North African issues are likely to become a source of increasingly serious friction among the non-Communist countries. We believe that North African developments will exert a strong influence on Arab and Asian attitudes toward the West both in the cold war and in event of global conflict. Many Latin American countries are also anti-

colonial in outlook and might support the North African nationalists.

49. Differences between the non-Communist powers as a result of North African developments will come to a focus in the UN. Further Arab-Asian efforts to secure UN intervention on North African questions might lead to a split in the Western-oriented UN majority which could be exploited on this and other issues by the Soviet Bloc.

50. The efforts of both sides to secure US support confront the US itself with a major policy dilemma and the prospect of a serious strain on its relations both with France and the Arab-Asian world. If the US appears to favor the North African nationalists, it will invite serious complications in its relations with France. The French Government has already intimated that the granting of additional US bases in North Africa will depend upon the US attitude toward the North African problem.

51. On the other hand, if the US strongly supports its NATO partner, it will probably lose influence among the Near and Far Eastern states. Sharp differences between the Arab states and the Western Powers over North Africa might diminish the prospects for securing Arab cooperation in Middle East defense. The US might also prejudice its prospects for subsequent influence in any North African state which might ultimately receive its independence.

### Prospects for Libyan Stability and Pro-Western Orientation

52. *Prospects for Internal Stability.* Libya's poverty and economic underdevelopment, unresolved Tripolitanian-Cyrenaican differences, the weakness of the government and the uncertain strength and attitude of the present ruler all make for an unstable future. Most important of these factors is the continued cleavage between the Cyrenaicans, who presently dominate the government, and the more advanced and numerous Tripolitani-ans, who constitute two-thirds of the population. The Tripolitani-ans are not yet sufficiently well-organized to challenge the present regime, but

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if they reconstitute a strong opposition group, the prospects for future internal schisms would grow. Increased internal instability might impede the use of Libyan bases by the US and UK.

53. Despite his failure thus far to take steps to unite his kingdom, King Idris is the strongest political factor in Libya. The current incapacity of the Libyan Parliament, the political indifference of the people and their traditional submission to authority have all strengthened his hand. The King is strongly supported by the British, who retain a dominant position in the country. The King, however, is 62 years of age and the succession has not yet been established. While accepting Idris, many Tripolitarians and some Cyrenaicans only reluctantly pledged allegiance to his dynasty as well. Unless the King survives long enough to consolidate his power, his death might be followed by a period of intrigues during which the kingdom could be dismembered.

54. *Probable Trends in Libyan External Relations.* At least during the next two or three years, Libya will almost certainly remain pro-Western in its orientation because of its acute need for external aid and its continued close ties with the US and UK. British influence has recently declined somewhat and the government has discharged a number of UK advisors. At the same time the King and Prime Minister have expressed a desire for closer relationship with the US and indicated that they would prefer the US to assume the role of their chief "protector."

55. Libya appears to regard its strategic position as a bargaining lever to extract greater financial and economic concessions; it will undoubtedly seek to increase the future price for continued or expanded use of its facilities. Libya is almost certain to ratify the proposed 20-year base agreement with the US and is

probably willing to join any Middle East defense organization. The government has indicated that US facilities in Cyrenaica would be welcome. A British-Libyan treaty of alliance also will probably be ratified soon, but Libya probably will not agree to its covering as long a period as the UK had hoped. Moreover, the related military and financial agreements may require protracted negotiations.

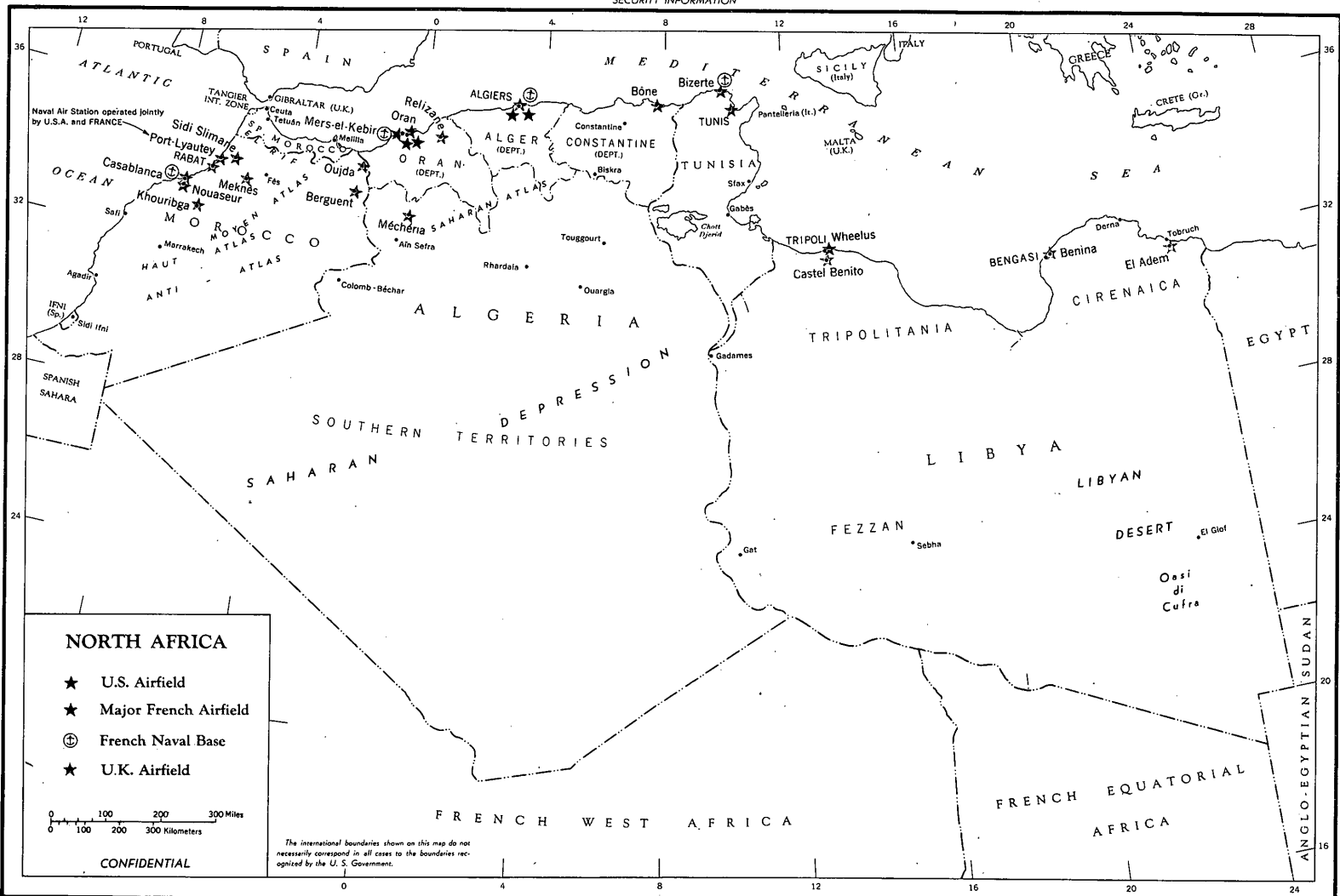
56. Despite strong Libyan resentment over the French sphere of influence in the Fezzan, there will probably be no outward trouble with France in the near future. The French are relieving the Libyan Government of a financial and administrative burden it might not otherwise be able to carry. Moreover, French influence in this remote area will remain only a minor issue so long as the major Cyrenaican-Tripolitanian differences are unresolved.

57. A Libyan swing toward closer alignment with the Arab states seems unlikely at present, largely because of US-UK influence and Cyrenaican fears of Egypt. Over the longer run, however, Libyan nationalism may well follow the pattern of the other Arab states in the direction of anti-Westernism, particularly if the Tripolitarians, already pro-Egyptian and anti-Western, assume a larger political role. Should the new kingdom break up under separatist pressures, Tripolitania might turn to Egypt for support. In any case the development of increasing anti-Westernism might lead to a reduction of US-UK influence and to obstruction of US-UK use of Libyan facilities. Much will depend upon the over-all state of Western relations with the Arab world. If Anglo-Egyptian differences are resolved and the Arab states enter a Middle East defense arrangement, such difficulties might not develop. If Arab relations with the West remain strained, however, there will be strong pressures on Libya to adopt a less pro-Western course.

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